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## THE CHILDREN OF THE KING'S REVELS AT WHITEFRIARS

Professor Joseph Quincy Adams, in his *Shakespearean Playhouses*, has written the best account that has yet appeared of the Children of the King's Revels at Whitefriars. He has done much to relieve history of some of the fictions which the devious minds of scholars have woven about the company. Hereafter, let us hope, no man will be seduced to believe with Fleay, that brilliant exemplar of the triumph of mind over fact, that the Whitefriars boys were a continuation of the Children of Paul's. And Professor Adams has rightly scorned the spurious document with which John Payne Collier sought to fill the gaps in his evidences. The eminent forger had published in his *New Facts regarding Shakespeare a Survey of the Precinct of Whitefriars* containing a number of interesting lies, for example that the theatre was situated over the Bishop's House, was built in the refectory of the dissolved monastery, and had been used as a theatre for more than thirty years past by the children of her Majesty. This *Survey* was liberally used by Cunningham in an article on "The Whitefriars Theatre, the Salisbury Court Theatre, and the Duke's Theatre in Dorset Gardens," published in *Transactions* of the Shakespeare Society (IV, 89), and Cunningham's article in turn was drawn upon by Wheatley and Cunningham in their *London Past and Present*. Thus, by the deliberate falsehood of Collier and the rash deduction of Fleay, the Children of Whitefriars were involved in error until E. K. Chambers, with his admirable essay in the *Modern Language Review*,<sup>1</sup> and more recently Professor Adams, have pretty effectively sifted truth from fancy.

My own motive for continuing the discussion is twofold. In the first place, I have a little that is new to add to history. In the second place, the first Whitefriars company interests me from a point of view which seems not to have appealed to any other of the historians. It interests me as an example of wildcat business. It was an ephemeral enterprise, promoted by greed and managed by chicane. It was from first to last

<sup>1</sup> Vol. IV, Jan. 1909, p. 153.



unsound, a parasitic growth on the Jacobean theatre. It was doomed to failure before it began, and it left a trail of ruinous lawsuits that kept alive its unsavory memory long after it had died. This essential unsoundness shows both in the conduct of business, and in the plays which the company produced.

# I.

The first Whitefriars company was rotten from the start. Just when or how it began is not known. The mainstay of our knowledge consists in the extremely interesting lawsuit of *George Andrews v. Martin Slatier*, of 1609, discovered by Greenstreet and published in the *Transactions* of the New Shakespeare Society (1887-93, Pt. III). Andrews begins his story in February of 1608, when he came into the company of shareholders, but the theatre had been in operation before that. The earliest play licensed for the Children of the King's Revels was Sharp-ham's *Cupid's Whirligig*, S.R. June 29, 1607. It is safe to infer that the play had been acted some months before then. And there is proof positive, as I shall show later, that the company was playing in August of 1607. But whether it was organized early in 1607, or in 1606, or in 1605 as Adams supposes, must remain for the present a matter of conjecture. I see no reason to date the beginning earlier than the latter part of 1606.

The leading spirit in organizing the company was not, as Adams believes, Michael Drayton, but was one Thomas Woodford. This man may yet prove to be an important figure in early Jacobean theatrical history. It is known, for example, that he owned an 18th share in the Red Bull Playhouse.<sup>2</sup> A few years ago, while rummaging in that most fascinating Hall of Mysteries, the Public Records Office in London, I came upon an intriguing notice of a suit for damages brought by one Thomas Woodford against one Edward Peerce in Easter term of 1606.<sup>3</sup> It seems that on December 2, 1604, Peerce fell upon Woodford and beat him "ita quod de vita eius desperabatur." The Court awarded damages. Unfortunately the *casus belli* was not recorded, nor is it quite certain that the Thomas whom Peerce "verberavit, vulneravit, et maletravit" in 1604 was the

<sup>2</sup> The decrees in his suit in 1613 against Aaron Holland for recovery of his dues may be read in Fleay's *Hist. of the Stage*, pp. 196-7.

<sup>3</sup> *Placita Coram Rege*, Easter, 4 Jas. I, fol. 536.



founder of Whitefriars playhouse, but when one remembers that a man named Edward Peerce was master of the Children of Paul's in 1604, one is strongly persuaded to smell out a theatrical row between the master of Paul's and the man who was perhaps even then attempting to set up a rival company. If this is indeed our Woodford, then his encounter with Peerce is prophetic of long years of wrangling, and of hundreds of pounds squeezed out of his dupes with the powerful aid of the King's Bench.

Thomas Woodford associated with himself in his enterprise the poet Michael Drayton, probably because of his connections with men of letters, but what part Drayton played, or whether he played any, is hard to tell. At any rate, he is merely a name in the documents which concern the Whitefriars theatre. Woodford then went about gathering his shareholders. By August of 1607 he had added Lording Barry, the playwright, William Trevill, and Edward Sibthorpe, as is evidenced by the fact that on the 12th of that month these three, with Drayton, became bound to Woodford for the payment of £60 on the 25th of November following.<sup>4</sup> The boys were acting then, as is proved by another lawsuit I found in the Records Office.<sup>5</sup> In Trinity term, 1608, one Richard Edwards sued Thomas Woodford, who for once is defendant, for debt incurred in the purchase of various properties used in plays. It seems that on August 30, 1607, Edmund Sharpham became indebted to Edwards in the sum of 17s. 2d. for "quatuor galeris anglice felt hattes & tribus legaminibus galeri anglice hatbandes," and on the same day Edward Sibthorpe became similarly indebted in 6s. 6d. "*pro vno galero Anglice a felt hatt & vno legamine galeri anglice a hat band.*" Then Woodford, on December 23, 1607, persuaded Edwards to accommodate him with "*vnum galerum phrigiatum cum argento anglice a felt hatt embrodered with silver & vnum ligamen galeri sum margaritis ornatum anglice a pearle hatt band,*" for use in a play to be given that day; promising that within three days after the present date he would pay Edwards the combined debts of the other two men, amounting to 23s. 8d. The trusting Edwards listened to the wily tongue of Woodford

<sup>4</sup> In Easter term, 1609, Woodford sued these four men for £120 in default of payment, and won. See *Placita Coram Rege*, Easter, 6 Jas. I, m. 483b.

<sup>5</sup> *Placita Coram Rege*, Trinity, 6 Jas. I, m. 1032.



and supplied the articles of apparel, but payment was not forthcoming, neither at the time stipulated nor after repeated demands. The Court awarded damages and costs of £5-6-8.

This slight bit of legal gossip contributes to the history of the Whitefriars company in two ways. In the first place, it corroborates my description of the enterprise as a dishonest one, and in the second place, it should remove any doubt that may still remain as to whether the children of Whitefriars and the children of the King's Revels were the same. The Edmund Sharpham here proved to be associated with the Whitefriars directors was of course the Sharpham who in 1607 published *Cupid's Whirligig* as acted "by the Children of his Majesty's Revels."

At some time between December, 1607, when he was negotiating with Edwards over the felt hats, and February, 1608, Thomas Woodford withdrew from the company, selling out his half interest to Lording Barry, the playwright. The probable reason for his action was that he had made what he could and was escaping before the crash, which he could foresee was inevitable. His name is absent from the articles of agreement which were drawn up in March of 1608. But he did not on that account cease to be active in bringing ruin on the company which he had founded.

In February of 1608 George Andrews was taken in. Andrews said that the lease of the Whitefriars monastery premisses was made to Thomas Woodford and Michael Drayton by Lord Buckhurst, but as regards the date of that lease his language is puzzling. What he said was, that about February, 1608, Lording Barry, the playwright, pretended to be possessed of a moiety of the playhouse premisses "by and under a lease made thereof, aboute Marche then next followinge, from the right honorable Robert, lord Buckhurst, vnto one Michaell Drayton and Thomas Woodford for the tearme of sixe yeares, eight monthes and twentie dayes then followinge." We should expect the lease to antedate the negotiations with Andrews. One is driven to suppose, either that Woodford had used some other premisses than the monastery previous to March of 1608, or else, as Professor Adams supposes, that the lease in question was a renewal. I am inclined to the first opinion, merely because the company was evidently being reorganized between



January and March of 1608, new shareholders were being brought in, an expert director was hired, and articles of agreement were drawn up. All this business would be more suitable to a broadening of the enterprise or the acquisition of new premises than to a mere renewal of lease.

The "proposition" that was put up to Andrews was very smooth. The promoters asked a mere £90 for a sixth part in the house and furnishings, explaining "that if it had not bene in love to the complaynante that they would not have parted soe easely with it, consideringe the benefitt which they affirmed would be to your orator the cleere somme of one hundred pounds yearly, aboue charges." Then he was shown theatrical apparel which was declared to be alone worth £400. Completely taken in by these "faire and false flatteringe speeches," he paid over his money. Then came disillusion. The apparel, which had moved him the most, he found to be worth not more than £5 in true value, and the expenses, upon which apparently he had not counted, fell upon him to the tune of £300. Granting a certain amount of heightening of his case, I see no reason to doubt the main truth of Andrews' story. It fits in very well with what we know of the management of the King's Revels.

Martin Slatier came in, seemingly, a short while after Andrews. In his Answer to Andrews' Bill of Complaint, he said that he could not have told Andrews in February, when Barry and Andrews were negotiating, about the value of the properties in the theatre, nor indeed have had any hand in the deal, because he had not at that time met the two men or taken any part in the affairs of the theatre. This may be true, but I doubt it. At any rate, he came into the company before March 10, when the articles of agreement were signed. This Slatier was an actor of long experience, who was brought in to take charge of the boys, train them and care for them. The only new fact I have been able to discover regarding him is not to his credit. In 1598 he was sued by another actor, Thomas Downton, for the value of a play book lost by him and found and kept by Slatier. Apparently Slatier then staged it with his own company, for so I take the words "*in vsu & Commodum suum proprium disposuit & convertit.*" Judgment was awarded the plaintiff.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps it was in memory of this unscrupulous deed

<sup>6</sup> *Placita Coram Rege*, Trinity term, 40 Eliz., Pt. 2, m. 830b.



that the shareholders in their articles of agreement covenanted "that if, at any time hereafter, any apparell, bookes, or any other goods or commodities shalbe conveyed or taken awaye by any of the said parties without the consent and allowance of the said residue of his fellow sharers, and the same exceedinge the value of twoe shillings, That then he or they so offendinge shall forfeite and loose all such benefitt, profit and comoditie as otherwise should arise and growe vnto him or them by their shares, besides the losse of their places and all other interest which they may clayme amongst vs."

These articles of agreement, signed March 10, 1608, between Martin Slatier and the rest of the shareholders, form one of the most interesting documents illustrating the interior economy of a Jacobean company that we possess, but they belong to general theatrical history rather than to the present study, and so I shall not pause over them. The full roster of shareholders now reads: Martin Slatier, Lording Barry, George Andrews, Michael Drayton, William Trevill, William Cooke, Edward Sibthorpe, and John Mason. I am not sure that these men were all the persons interested in the theatre. There is, among the *Decrees and Orders* of the Court of Requests, a note of a suit brought June 27, 1610, by William Trevill, of London, tallow chandler, together with Hugh Fountayne, Esq., Emanuel Fenton, Thomas Savage, Margaret Deborse, Edward Cowlin, Henry Crathorne, and divers others of the creditors of Trevill, against William Methold, William Cooke, Felix Wilson, Thomas Woodford, George Andrews, Richard Brogden, Richard Jobbes, Martin Slatier, John Marks, Michael Drayton, Elizabeth Brown, Richard Black, and Richard Hunter, others of his creditors, to be relieved in equity concerning certain debts which Trevill owed the defendants upon bonds and otherwise. The complainants, because Trevill was very poor and they had pity on him, consented on the mediation of Sir Edmund Bowyer to remit part of the debts and give long terms of payment. But the defendants would not consent thereto, and, with the exception of John Marks, had gone about to vex and annoy Trevill in common law upon "divers bonds and other specialties wherein or in the most whereof the said Trevill is onelie suretie for others although there are diverse others more sufficient then hee bound with him in the same." There is no way of telling whether all



these creditors were concerned in the Whitefriars theatre, but the presence of most of Trevill's associates among them creates a presumption.

The life of the newly organized company was brief and stormy. Immediately after the signing of the articles Lording Barry, who as Woodford's successor doubtless occupied the most important place, began to suffer a bombardment of law-suits. In Easter term (April 15 to May 8) he was sued by one Anthony Wilkins on two counts: first for £7 on a bond dated August 15, 1607, promising payment of 20s. a week beginning October 3 next; and secondly for £4-6-9 on another bond of the same date.<sup>7</sup> Judgment in both cases was given the plaintiff. In the same term, Thomas Woodford won judgment of £122 for forfeiture of a bond dated August 12, 1607.<sup>8</sup> In the following Trinity term (May 22 to June 12) Woodford brought three suits against Barry, two of £40 and £11 on a bond of August 15, 1607, and one of £7 on a bond of November 16.<sup>9</sup> These likewise were successful. Such a deluge of suits must have had the effect of greatly cooling Barry's interest in the Whitefriars theatre.

The theatre was closed within less than a year after the signing of the articles of agreement. Andrews, who sued on February 9, 1609, said that "the originall lease made by the said Robert, lord Buckhurst, for non-payment of rent due, before any assignement of the said sixth parte of the same made to your orator, was forfeited and in extremitie of lawe lost." I am inclined to agree with Professor Adams that the crash came about the middle of 1608. In April came the inhibitions of acting caused by the performance of Chapman's *Biron* at Blackfriars, and in July a further general inhibition resulted from the plague, which raged until December. But I am not so ready to agree with his theory that the lease held by Barry and his fellows was transferred to the company of Blackfriars children, who moved over to Whitefriars in the early spring of 1609. The original lease made by Lord Buckhurst to Woodford and Drayton was, as Andrews explicitly says, forfeited for non-

<sup>7</sup> *Placita Coram Rege*, Easter, 6 Jas. I, m. 483.

<sup>8</sup> *Placita Coram Rege*, Easter, 6 Jas. I, m. 483b.

<sup>9</sup> *Placita Coram Rege*, Trinity, 6 Jas. I, m. 1312.



payment of rent. Corroborating evidence comes from the suit of *Trevill v. Woodford*.

This suit was referred to by Cunningham in his article on the Whitefriars theatre of which I have already spoken. This is what he says: "The theatre in the Whitefriars was not, I believe, rebuilt, although the case of *Trevill v. Woodford*, in the Court of Requests, informs us that plays were performed in the Whitefriars Theatre as late as 1621; Sir Anthony Ashley, the then landlord of the house, entering the Theatre in that year, and turning the players out of doors, on pretence that half a year's rent was unpaid him." Cunningham is grossly and inexcusably wrong in his date, but the rest of his facts are accurate. For some reason he printed no more than this brief note of the case. Following his lead I was able to find a summary in the *Decrees and Orders Books* of the Court of Requests.<sup>10</sup> The suit is brought by Susan Trevill, widow of the unfortunate William, to revive a suit formerly brought by her husband against Woodford to be relieved against two judgments obtained by Woodford in 1608. These judgments amounted respectively to £41 and £121, and were grounded on two obligations by which Trevill had become bound to Woodford. "The consideration which induced the said William Trevill to become bound in the said bonds being only for a sixth parte of the Lease of a Playhouse in the Whitefryers whereunto the said William Trevill was drawne by the perswasion of S<sup>r</sup>. Anthony Ashley knight & one M<sup>r</sup>. Smith & the Defendant who likewise preuailed with the said Trevill (being ignorant in the Course of sharers in a Playhouse) to become engaged in seuerall other bonds & billes to diuerse persons for payment of diuerse sommes only to make a stocke for supply of the Playhouse And although that the said S<sup>r</sup>. Anthony Ashley being Landlord on the Playhouse by combinacion with the Defendant vpon pretence that halfe a yeares Rent for the Playhouse was unpaid entred into the Playhouse & turned the Players out of doors & tooke the forfeiture of the Lease whereby the said William Trevill was frustrated of all benefitt which he was to haue by the said Lease." Notwithstanding this loss, the plaintiff goes on to say, Woodford took forth two several executions upon the said judgments, levied the same upon the goods of Trevill, and having satisfied

<sup>10</sup> 17 & 18 Chas. I, fol. 247.



himself of all that was due him, delivered up the bonds to be cancelled. But not having acknowledged satisfaction in proper form, after about ten years, that is to say in 1621, he threatened to levy his judgments again by *scire facias*, and thus frightened Trevill into paying £6 more. Then Woodford sealed a general release to Trevill, which the latter ignorantly conceived to be sufficient, not knowing what satisfaction upon record meant, and omitting to have Woodford perform such satisfaction. So matters rested for twenty years. Then Woodford, having got into his hands the bonds and the release, threatened to levy the judgments a third time. Trevill having died just at this time, Woodford proceeded against his estate, whereupon the widow preferred her bill of revivor and obtained an order reviving all the former proceedings. The judgment of the Court is that the judgments were fully satisfied twenty years ago, and the plaintiff is ordered discharged of all obligations to the defendant.

These proceedings prove pretty well, I should say, what kind of man Woodford was. To win a judgment of debt, to have it fully satisfied, and then on two succeeding occasions extending over thirty years, to attempt to execute the judgment again, argues an extraordinarily tenacious rapacity. Such was the founder of the first Whitefriars theatre. No business in which he had a main hand could be an honest one. It is quite clear that he floated the theatre to draw in shareholders and sell stock, then got out before the collapse, and thereafter set about mulcting his debtors.

A few matters in this suit are of interest. In the first place, Andrews' statement that the theatre was closed for nonpayment of rent is corroborated, with additional details. The lease was originally made by Robert, Lord Buckhurst, but the landlord who threw the company out was Sir. Anthony Ashley. Evidently the property had changed hands since the lease was made. Lord Buckhurst became the second Earl of Dorset on April 19, 1608, and died February 27, 1609. The transfer must have taken place before his death, because Andrews' bill of **complaint** is dated February 9. The widow Trevill stated that Ashley combined with Woodford both in drawing her husband into the trap and in ousting the company. This looks as though Ashley was abetting Woodford in his plot to ruin the company.



One would like to know something more about the relations of Ashley to Woodford and the Children of the King's Revels. And one would like to know more about "Mr. Smith."

Thus ended the King's Revels at Whitefriars. Their place was taken on or about March 1609 by the expelled children of the Queen's Revels from Blackfriars, and the subsequent history of the Whitefriars theatre belongs to them and to their successors. The whole organization of the first company came to an end in 1608. None of the shareholders had connection with the Queen's Revels company. It was a complete smash-up. If Woodford had founded the company expressly to ruin it, he was successful. Not George Andrews or William Trevill, who paid for their shares without receiving any dividends, nor Richard Edwards, who had to go to law to recover the cost of articles sold to the company, nor Sir Anthony Ashley, who evicted the company for nonpayment of rent, nor Lording Barry, who paid for his investments in the Court of King's Bench, nor Martin Slatier, who with his family of ten was turned out of doors, nor I dare say any of the other members of the association except Thomas Woodford could tell what benefit they had derived from their outlay, or what chance of benefit they stood from an enterprise so rotten at heart as this company of the King's Revels at Whitefriars.

## II.

Seven plays, aside from a *Torrismount* mentioned in the Andrews-Slatier suit, may with a sufficient degree of certainty be assigned to the first Whitefriars Revels Company. All bear on their title pages the statement that they were acted by the "Children of the King's Majesty's Revels."

|   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <i>Cupid's Whirligig</i> (Edmund Sharpham) . . . . .  | S. R. June 29, 1607, pub. 1607  |
| <i>The Family of Love</i> (Middleton) . . . . .       | S. R. Oct. 12, 1607, pub. 1608  |
| <i>Humour out of Breath</i> (Day) . . . . .           | S. R. Apr. 12, 1608, pub. 1608  |
| <i>The Dumb Knight</i> (Machin and Markham) . . . . . | S. R. Aug. 6, 1608, pub. 1608   |
| <i>Two Maids of Mortlake</i> (Robt. Armin) . . . . .  | S. R. ? pub. 1609               |
| <i>The Turk</i> (John Mason) . . . . .                | S. R. March 10, 1609, pub. 1610 |
| <i>Ram Alley</i> (Lording Barry) . . . . .            | S. R. Nov. 9, 1610, pub. 1611   |

Perhaps we should add Day's *Law Tricks*, published in 1608.

Of these plays, *The Turk* and *Ram Alley* were almost certainly written for the company, because Mason and Barry were



shareholders. With almost equal certainty *The Family of Love* and *Two Maids of Mortlake* were not written for this company, but were revived plays, as I shall show later. *Cupid's Whirligig* I believe was written for the company, and in the absence of any clew to the contrary we must assume the same for *Humour out of Breath* and *The Dumb Knight*. As these plays are all of them little known except to the specialist, it may not be amiss to glance briefly over them.

Robert Armin's *Two Maids of Mortlake*, to begin with the oldest, was written before the deaths of Elizabeth and Dean Nowell. When the Earl is summoned to court he says, "We will attend her:"<sup>11</sup> and John the idiot speaks of having seen "Master Dean Nowell" at St. Paul's.<sup>12</sup> One limit of composition is thus fixed at the death of Nowell in 1602. The other may be fixed in 1597, if I understand a passage correctly. Toward the end of the play<sup>13</sup> Sir William Verger says:

"Yet remember Donington's man, Grimes,  
Who for an heir so stolne and married,  
Was hanged, and the sergeant at armes,  
For assisting them did loose his place."

The *Acts of the Privy Council*, under date June 14, 1597, record that Alice Stoite, a young woman of Dorset, was abducted by one Dinington and others. No further particulars are given, and I have been able to trace no other likely reference to "Donington's man Grimes," but it seems reasonably sure that the abduction of Alice Stoite was the one meant by Sir William. If that were not so, the coincidence of names would be singular.

It is not easy to tell where Armin was in the period 1597-1602 within which the *Two Maids* was presumably written. Collier, in his sketch of Armin's life,<sup>14</sup> says that the actor belonged at one time to the company of Lord Chandos, who died in 1602, but that he may have gone over to the Lord Chamberlain's company at the Globe about 1598. Yet the *Two Maids* would seem not to have been written for the Lord Chamberlain's company, because in the address "To the friendly peruser" Armin says that the play "in part was sometime acted more

<sup>11</sup> Sig. B4 verso.

<sup>12</sup> Sig. B4 recto.

<sup>13</sup> Sig. I verso.

<sup>14</sup> *Pub. Shakes. Soc.* 1846.



naturally in the Citty, if not in the hole." This would exclude the Globe. Armin himself, as he goes on to say, had acted "John in the Hospital" at the first presentation.

As a play the *Two Maids* leaves a good deal to be desired. Starting out pretty well, with a clearly conceived and handled plot, it degenerates into episodes which defy credulity. Such incidents as the supposed death of Mary, her burial in the Scilly Isles, her exhumation by the Governor and restoration to her father, savor of the carefree invention of Heywood's *Fair Maid of the West*, which was written about the same time. The style is fantastic in the extreme, being characterized by a kind of grammatical shorthand and a preciosity of diction that drives the reader to despair. It is the style of a man determined to be "literary," and proud of his fund of Latin quotations.

Middleton's *Family of Love*, thought Fleay, was acted "early in 1607, after Middleton left Paul's, and before he joined the Blackfriars Boys. . . . But it appears from the Address to the Reader that this play had been performed with some success before (probably by the Paul's boys in 1604, when the Family of love were such subjects of public attention), and marks of alteration are manifest in the extant version."<sup>15</sup> Let us examine briefly Fleay's evidence. The address "To the Reader" merely apologises for printing the play when it was "stale," after "the General voice of the people had sealed it for good." This might be construed to mean that the play had enjoyed its greatest success prior to 1607, and hence in another theatre, but such an interpretation is hardly justified by the wording. As to the "alterations," which Fleay implies were due to transfer from one company to another, they consist merely in the use, in two cases, of two names for the same character, a confusion such as one finds occasionally in Shakespeare quartos and which is sufficiently explained by Middleton's statement that the play was printed without proper supervision. Hence Fleay's argument does not amount to much. Yet I believe he was right in thinking the play antedated 1607, on the strength of an allusion in the text which he overlooked. In IV 3 (p. 81. Vol. III, of Bullen's Middleton) Gerardine says: "I am, if it please you, of the spick and span new-set-up company of porters." Here is a very definite topical reference. The company of porters was

<sup>15</sup> *Biog. Chron.*, II, 94.



instituted, apparently, in the forepart of 1605, as I judge from the fact that on June 15 of that year a ballad was licensed entitled: "A newe ballad Composed in commendacon of the Societie or Company of the porters."<sup>16</sup> Gerardine's emphasis on the brand-newness of this company would have point only if it followed soon after the event. I therefore would date the play about the middle of 1605. And in that case it was probably given by the St. Paul's boys for whom Middleton was then writing.

Another and more elaborate topical reference, in I 3, to a play of Samson carrying the "town-gates on his neck from the lower to the upper stage" is of little service, because the only play of the period on Samson which is known is one mentioned by Henslowe in July of 1602. And this play is not extant.

*The Family of Love* is not one of Middleton's best. Although not so bawdy as some, it is bad enough in all conscience. The main idea of a gallant who makes sure of his mistress by getting her with child strikes the tone of the play. Except for occasional clever turns of dialogue, such as only Middleton could do, there is little to amuse or interest. The blank verse, which appears in the Gerardine-Maria plot, is mostly turgid and cold.

*Cupid's Whirligig*, by Edmund Sharpham, was licensed so early in the career of the King's Revels as to give rise to the supposition that it also was a revived play. He had already written *The Fleire* for the Blackfriars boys. But Sharpham was in 1607 connected with the King's Revels, as I have proved by the Richard Edwards suit, and he very likely wrote his *Whirligig* for that company. In Act II Nan says that Sir Timothy Troublesome's heart beats "for all the world like the Denmarke Drummer." If, as seems likely, this be a reference to the visit of the king of Denmark in July of 1606, the play could hardly have been written and produced before 1607.

Day's *Humour out of Breath* belongs without doubt to the spring of 1608. This is determined on the one hand by the date of license, April 12, and on the other hand by a reference to the great frost of December, 1607. In III 4 Aspero says: "For my beard, indeed that was bitten the last great frost, and so were a number of Justices of the peace besides." Though Fleay is

<sup>16</sup> Arber's *Stationer's Register*.



not accurate in saying that there was no frost between 1598 and 1607-8, it is nevertheless true that no other frost approached in vigor that which began on December 8, 1607, and returned more violently on December 22, freezing the Thames and keeping it frozen through most of January.<sup>17</sup> In the address "To Signior No-body" we read: "Being to turne a poore friendlesse child into the world, yet sufficiently featur'd too, had it been all of one mans getting, (woe to the iniquitie of Time the whilest) my desire is to preferre him to your seruice." This might be understood to mean, and in fact has been so understood, that Day had help in writing the play, but his name stands alone on the title page, and, more conclusively, there is no deviation in the style of the play from Day's known manner.

This play is the only one on our list which one would mark as written for children. It is a comedy of artificial situation, written without passion in a style of considerable delicacy and charm. Yet these qualities are attributable to Day, rather than to his players. He was the foremost disciple of Lyly in the 17th century, and while undergoing certain inevitable influences of contemporary drama he wrote as much in his master's vein as he could. The plot of *Humour out of Breath*, with its banished duke living in sylvan seclusion and its regnant duke disguising himself as a serving man to watch over his sons, reminds us of *As You Like It* and the *Fleire* (or the *Fawn*). But the artificially paired lovers (two sons and a daughter with two daughters and a son), the pages, and the general conduct of the dialogue are all Lyly.

Not without plausibility is the suggestion that Day's *Law Tricks* was also acted by the Whitefriars boys. The 1608 quarto states that the play had been "divers times acted by the Children of the Revels." Ordinarily this would mean the Queen's Revels at Blackfriars, and Fleay so understood it. He puts the play in 1606, but Bullen, in his edition of Day, shows references to speeches in *Pericles*, which is generally assigned to 1607-8. It is perhaps unlikely that Day, after his disastrous venture with *The Isle of Gulls* produced by the Blackfriars boys in 1607, should have written another play in the same satirical vein for the same company. In IV 2 Juculo, the page,

<sup>17</sup> See Stowe's *Chronicle*.



tells a rigamarole about recent events in England, particularly a flood in July so great that the boatmen landed fares in the middle aisle of Paul's and men caught fish in the Exchange; this may be a reminiscence of the mighty wind which in January of 1607 caused an inflooding of the sea.<sup>18</sup> The mention of July puts the play between July of 1607 and the summer of 1608, when the company went out of existence. The following allusion, if one could identify it, might serve to date the play more conclusively. It occurs in the course of a discussion of tobacco in Act III:

"Yet there is one dunce, a kind of plodding Poet,  
Sweares twas not in the first creation  
Because he finds no ballad argument  
To prove old *Adam* a Tobacconiste."

*The Dumb Knight*, by Lewis Machin and Gervase Markham, was another play with a satirical tinge. The address "To the Understanding Reader" says that "Rumour . . . by the help of his intelligencer Envy, hath made strange constructions on this Dumb Knight." What caused these strange constructions it is not easy to see. Fleay thought the satire lay in the subplot of the Orator Prate, his wife, and his clients, but offered no explanation of the satirical point. I think it rather more likely that if the play gave offense it was through the savage attacks on law and lawyers which are put into the mouths of Mechant. Berating the law was a favorite pastime at Whitefriars.

There are no references within the play to give us a clew to its date. It is a heavy-handed tragicomedy, whose heroics and bawdry are alike without distinction.

*The Turk*, by John Mason, and *Ram Alley*, by Lording Barry, were surely written for the first Whitefriars company, because their authors were shareholders therein. Neither, so far as we know, was connected with the company which came over from Blackfriars early in 1609 and which had no business or other affiliation with the ill-starred company launched by Thomas Woodford. Of John Mason practically nothing is known. Professor J. Q. Adams, who has edited his play for Bang's *Materialen zur Kunde des älteren Englischen Dramas*, supposes that *The Turk* was written in 1606-7. There is no internal

<sup>18</sup> Stowe's *Chronicle*.



evidence to assist in finding the date. It is a bloody, extravagant tragedy of the Marston type, composed of murders, lust, incest, ghostly visitations, and seeking comic relief in a lecherous subplot. It is in all respects an imitative play, without the requisite energy to make its blood-and-thunder tyrades strike fire.

*Ram Alley* is an easy going pot-pourri of popular situations, mainly of the school of Middleton, including a spendthrift younger brother who marries his mistress to a rascally lawyer, the rivalry of various gallants for the hand of the rich widow Taffeta, and a maid who masquerades as a man to follow her lover. There are allusions to the statute of 4 Jac. I, c. V, (1606-7) which authorized stocking a man for drunkenness, as when Justice Tutchin says:

"Now could I sit in my chair at home and nod,  
A drunkard to the stocks by vertue of  
The last statute rarely."

This proves that the play was not written before the organization of the Whitefriars Revels. The Prologue protests against "the Satyres tooth and Waspish sting;" declares that the play is to be free of any satirical purpose, and is to be so innocent that even the Puritans will be pleased. Needless to say, such protests as these go for little. This play, like others of the same company, is hard on the legal profession.

### III.

I said at the beginning that the first Whitefriars company was a piece of wildcat speculation, and that the proof of this statement was to be found in their conduct of affairs and in their plays. I have dealt sufficiently with their conduct of affairs; a few comments on their plays will be enough to make my point clear in that respect. In the first place, with the exception of Middleton and Day they had no connections with the better class of dramatists of the day. And Middleton should be discounted because the one play of his which they used was probably borrowed from another company, and he wrote no more for them. As to Day, although he enjoys a certain reputation today, it is certain that he had very little in his own time and should be counted as one of the obscure. All the other men are nobodies. In the second place, if one considers quality of play rather than prominence of author, the



conclusion is equally unfavorable. In the whole list only Day's *Humour out of Breath* may be read with any sense that one is associating with an author of literary taste. All the rest are dull, imitative, second-hand material cut on patterns popular in the first decade of the 17th century, but without style.

It is quite plain what Thomas Woodford and his coadjutors in the King's Revels at Whitefriars were up to. They intended to capitalize the great popularity of the theatre in London, and the success which the children's companies at St. Paul's and the Blackfriars had enjoyed, by founding a similar company in the liberty of Whitefriars, just outside the City (a precinct, be it observed, of unsavory reputation in that day as it continued to be for a hundred years). And because their purpose was dishonest (at least Woodford's) they set about selling as many shares as possible and putting on a bold front, while at the same time they gathered a shoddy repertory of plays, partly from old plays given elsewhere, partly from amateurs on their own board of shareholders, and partly from a few hangers-on of the writing profession. The result was what everyone could have foreseen—ruin. At least one did foresee it, and saved himself before the crash. That man was the wily promoter of the enterprise, Thomas Woodford.

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